

A slow day on jury duty? Access to Internet may help

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■ Mount Clemens facility offers wireless Web to prospective jurors with laptops in waiting room.

By CHARLES E. RAMIREZ
The Detroit News

MOUNT CLEMENS — Chuck Corbit did three things while waiting to find out if he was going to be picked for a jury Tuesday: He caught up on work, planned a vacation and checked on his stock portfolio.

"Friends told me I should bring something along to pass the time," the 61-year-old auto parts company owner said as he sat at a table with his Apple laptop in the jury room on the fifth floor of the Macomb County Circuit Court.

"I saw on my notice about jury duty that they have wireless Internet service now, and I have my laptop with me half the time anyway, so that's what I brought."

The Shelby Township man is among the first county residents reporting for jury duty at the court in Mount Clemens to use the new service, which allows users to send e-mail, surf the Web or remotely connect into other computer systems. More than 20,000 county residents report for jury duty at the Circuit Court every year.

The wireless service — which allows prospective jurors with laptops and handheld computers to access the Internet from the courthouse's waiting room without hooking up to a phone line or modem — was launched by the office of Macomb County Clerk/Register of Deeds Carmella Sabaugh last week.

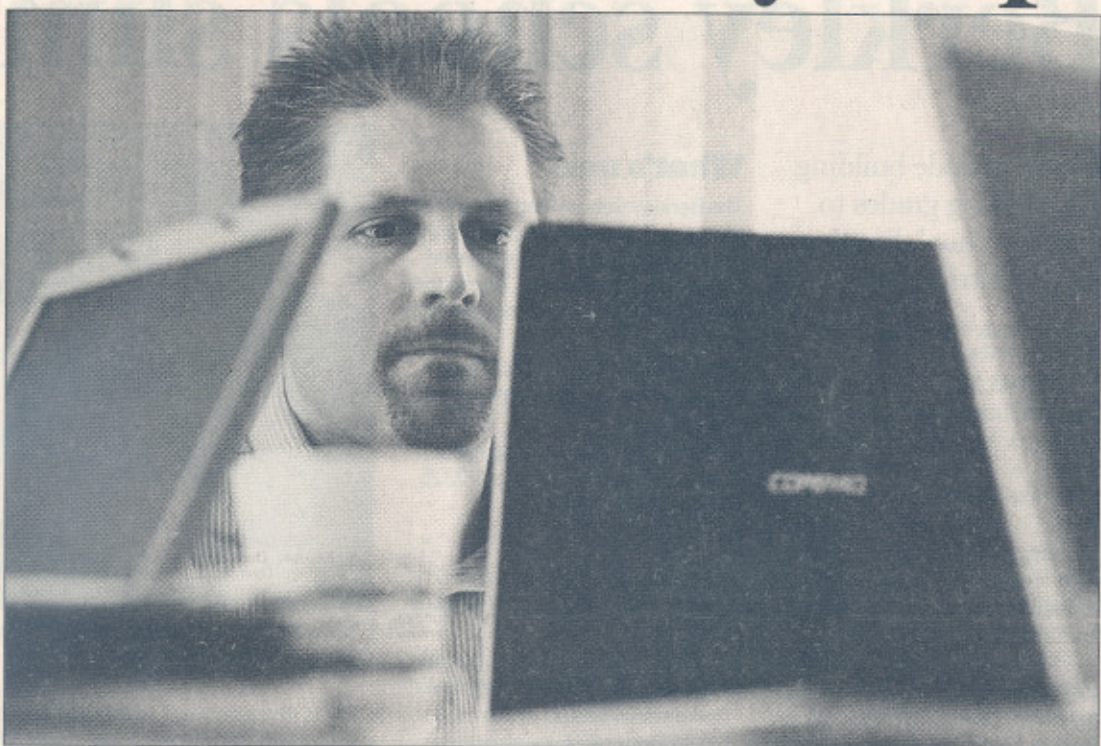
"It's our way of helping make jury duty more convenient for the public," Sabaugh said.

Sabaugh said she believes the county is one of the first in the state to offer the service.

The wireless Internet project in the courthouse cost the clerk's office about \$500. The office also will pay a monthly subscription fee of \$65 to AT&T Inc., the San Antonio-based telecommunications giant.

To use the service, jurors are given a password to access the Internet. To ensure security, the password is only valid between business hours and it's changed daily, Sabaugh said.

The service is only available in the waiting room.



Photos by Todd McInturf / The Detroit News

Brian Bourlier, 38, of Clinton Township uses the County Circuit Court's new wireless Internet to check on his eBay store. The courthouse gives prospective jurors with laptops and handheld computers free Web access.

Wireless Internet

Macomb County Circuit Court is offering residents reporting for jury duty free wireless Internet service. Here's how it works:

Residents who want to use their laptops or handheld computers while waiting to be chosen for a duty receive a password when they sign in. The password allows them to log in and use the service securely and is valid weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

Residents selected to serve on juries can't use the service once they're chosen to serve or in any of the courtrooms.

Source: Macomb County Clerk/Register of Deeds Carmella Sabaugh

Corbit said he likes the service and the speed for connecting to the Internet was pretty fast.

"I couldn't tell the difference between my connection here and the one I have at home with a cable modem," he said. "It's perfect."

The program comes on the heels of other improvements Sabaugh's office has made to make jury duty more pleasant for county residents. Among them:

■ The Circuit Court has recently



Ernst & Young accountant Chuck Fliehm, 32, of Sterling Heights checks his e-mail as he waits to find out if he will be picked for a jury.

switched to a system that requires residents to report for just one day of jury duty instead of four.

■ The clerk's office also launched a program in conjunction with the Suburban Mobility Authority for Regional Transport that provides free bus tickets to jurors.

■ Residents waiting to be selected for a jury can request books in the jury room from the Mount Clemens Public Library through the Internet.

Macomb County Chief Judge Antonio Viviano hailed the wireless Internet program.

"Our increasing caseload requires more and more jurors," he said in a statement. "Clerk Sabaugh's service is another positive change."

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